PATTERNS OF POWER · THE ENCOUNTER

No Empty Ground

The Colonial Encounter as a Near-Census of Political Orders — Why Every Conqueror Met a Prior Conquest, Why His Move Was Set by the Settlement He Found, and How the Walls Carneiro Found in Geography Were Built Again in Statute

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

Preface: what this paper is

The collaboration, the two orders it sets against each other, and the promise that it stands alone.

This paper belongs to the Patterns of Power project and is a collaboration. The questions, the direction, the pattern-recognition and the final judgement are the author's; the synthesis, the drafting and the scholarly retrieval were done with Claude, Anthropic's model, with every load-bearing claim checked against a source before anything was built on it. The method is declared because it is a new way of making knowledge and ought to be visible rather than concealed.

The project asks one question of particular historical orders: how does a distribution of holdings taken by force become an arrangement that armed men will defend rather than contest? How does a warlord's camp become a country? This paper approaches that question from an unusual direction — through two African orders as they stood on the eve of British conquest, and through what the British were consequently able and unable to do to them.

It is built on two case studies produced earlier in this project under a related but different framework, and it does not argue against them. It reads their evidence through the settlement framework and asks what that framework gains and loses by the reading. Where the present reading revises the earlier one it says so; where the earlier study's finding stands unimproved it says that too.

The paper does five things.

It argues that **the colonial encounter is a different class of evidence** from the archive this project usually works, and one it badly needs — something close to a census of the political orders extant in a given century, taken by observers who went everywhere, including to orders that had built no monuments and kept no records, and who wrote down what they found because they had a practical use for it. It then names the specific bias that makes this instrument dangerous, which is that the bias runs along precisely the axis the framework wants to measure.

It states, as a finding rather than a preamble, that **no conqueror in this record ever met an unbuilt baseline.** Every order the British encountered was itself a former conquest that had become the shape of the world for the people inside it — including, and especially, the one that had no ruler at all.

It sets the two orders against each other as a **matched pair**: the same empire, the same decade, adjacent territory, and, at the other end, the cheapest hold in this project's

collection and one of the most expensive. What differed was a single feature of the orders they met, and the paper argues that the conqueror's whole subsequent experience was downstream of it.

It treats the colonial closing of the exit as **Carneiro's circumscription argument run as an experiment with a treatment date** — an open frontier, an order that stayed flat because ambition could walk away, and then a railway, a reserve boundary, a tax payable only in coin, a metal tag at the throat, and a forbidden crop, with the administrative minutes surviving. Where geography supplied no walls, a state built them in statute, and here we can watch it being done and read the reasons its own officials gave.

And it enters **two corrections to this project's recent papers**, one of which limits a scale I proposed a short time ago and should have limited then.

The paper stands alone. No prior reading is assumed — not of this project, not of East African history, not of anthropology, and not of any scholar named. Every borrowed idea is built from scratch in plain words before it is used.

One discipline governs throughout, and this paper owes it more than most. Its subject is conquest, dispossession, compelled labour, a registration system worn on the body, and a famine and epidemic catastrophe whose dead were never counted. To explain the machinery by which such things were done efficiently is not to soften them, and an account that finds a conquest cheap has said something about the conqueror's costs and nothing whatever about the price paid by the people conquered. This project states that obligation in the phrase *legibility is not pardon*, and discharges it in Part XI at length rather than in a clause.

The question

Two puzzles, one of them about a railway and one of them about the shape of the world.

Here is the first puzzle, and it is the sharper of the two because it holds so much constant.

Between roughly 1890 and 1905 the same empire, staffed in places by the same men, acquired two African territories lying a few hundred miles apart. In the kingdom of Buganda, on the northern shore of Lake Victoria, Britain established what this project's earlier study calls the cheapest hold in its entire collection: a protectorate run for decades by a handful of officials over a large population, with little visible force at its centre, extracting a growing revenue through an existing native administration that continued to do very nearly what it had always done. In the highlands east of the lake, in the country of the Kikuyu, the same empire built one of the most expensive holds in the collection: a colony that had to manufacture its own collaborating elite twice over, that hung a numbered metal container on the neck of every adult male because it could not otherwise be sure where he was, that forbade its subjects by law to grow the crop the land grew best, that split its own record in two so the metropole could not see what the reserve was made to live, and that ended in an emergency, a forest war, and a departure three years after the cheap one.

Same empire. Same decade. Adjacent country. Neighbouring peoples of comparable technology and comparable numbers. And two experiences of rule so different that they read as different centuries.

The explanation is not that one people was docile and the other warlike; the Baganda supplied the armies that conquered the region for the British, and the Kikuyu were not conspicuously more resistant than anyone else at the outset. It is not a difference of British intention, since the men, the Colonial Office and the doctrine were largely shared. **The difference was in the shape of the order each conqueror found**, and specifically in one feature of it, and the first half of this paper is an argument about which feature.

The second puzzle is larger and vaguer and is the one that motivated the enquiry.

This project runs what its author calls *landscapes* — long openings that describe the order standing on the ground before the conquest that is the study's subject. The practice was adopted for a methodological reason and has produced an empirical result that was not planned for. **In every landscape, the order found on the ground turned**

out to be a former conquest. Not a baseline, not an original condition, not people simply living somewhere. A prior build: a distribution of holdings taken by force at some earlier date, legitimated, transmitted, and eventually naturalised so completely that the people inside it experienced it as the shape of the world rather than as an arrangement anyone had adopted.

And the second half of the result is the part that ought to be surprising and is easy to walk past. **In every landscape there was also an interpreter class and a source of rightfulness that people deferred to.** Nobody was found simply hanging around. There was always somebody who read the ground, whether he was a sacred king, a council of circumcised elders, a lineage trustee, or a diviner — and always something he read.

That is either a deep finding or an empty one, and Part I is an attempt to establish which. If it is deep, it needs an explanation of why the pattern recurs, and this project's answer is that recurrence of this kind is neither cultural diffusion nor a law of history but **selection**: positions afford few good moves, most attempts fail, and the record keeps the ones that held. If it is empty, it is because any order whatever has a history and any history involves somebody displacing somebody, in which case the claim reduces to the observation that time passes.

The framework, compressed

Possession, ownership, the anchor, the floor, and the wall around the exit.

Everything below rests on a distinction ordinary speech collapses, and it must be kept separate.

Possession is what force holds now. Nobody presently able to take a thing is taking it. Possession is entirely present-tense and expires exactly when the capacity sustaining it expires — at illness, at absence, and completely at death.

Ownership is a claim about the future and about other people: that this will be mine tomorrow while I sleep, mine next season while I am away, and that when I die you will treat my son as its holder. Ownership is not a relation between a person and a thing. It is a structure of expectations about how other people will behave toward a thing across time, including across my absence and my death.

Force is sovereign over the first and impotent over the second. A sword takes a field today; it cannot promise the field next spring, still less that a boy will hold it. **The part of a holding that force cannot reach is exactly the part that distinguishes ownership from possession, and it must therefore be manufactured out of something that is not force.** Read "a holding" broadly: an office, a rank, a chieftaincy, a right to labour, a standing on a ridge.

Why armed men cannot settle unaided

Everyone in a world of armed men would prefer a settlement, and that fact explains nothing, because the question is why any particular settlement holds at the moment when breaking it would pay. The political scientist James Fearon set out the difficulty in 1995: nobody can bind their future self, so a bargain struck at today's balance of strength will be renegotiated at tomorrow's, and striking first is frequently correct even for a party who sincerely wants peace.

The decision that governs is not the aggressor's but the **bystanders'**. Each asks whether this is his quarrel, and absent a common ground of title the honest answer is no — spending his men on a neighbour's defence buys casualties and an enemy, and if he intervenes and the others do not he has made himself the next target while they husbanded their strength. So every bystander waits, and each knows the others are reasoning identically, and that shared expectation of inaction is what makes the original

seizure safe. **Warlordism is a coordination failure among the men who might have punished it, not a moral failure.**

The anchor and its one condition

Now suppose every holding derives its rightfulness from one source. The bystander's arithmetic inverts: letting this seizure stand establishes that holdings may be taken, which is a fact about *his* holding. Intervention becomes self-defence at one remove, and he can predict that the others are computing the same thing, so acting does not expose him.

Call that source the **anchor**. Its work is performed on the bystanders' expectations. A party competing for the spoils cannot be it, because a title granted by a competitor is a forecast about that competitor's health — which is why the anchor must be **unforgeable by the current claimants**, and why the most dangerous move is not breaking the rule but changing it, since rule-change does not trigger the coalition at all.

From which follows the framework's most operational claim, and the one the first African case tests:

> ***A settlement of armed men holds only where the anchor is the sole author of their titles.*** *Where a competing patron can grant title that endures — land, office, a heritable share — the order has two authors, and an order with two authors is a contest between them wearing the costume of a settlement.*

The reason is not disloyalty. A magnate whose lands come from a patron rather than from the anchor has a merely *conditional* interest in the anchor's integrity: if his patron moves against the settlement his rational course is to follow, because his title travels with his patron. He does not defect from the bystander coalition; he was never fully in it. And every man in his position computes the same way, so the patron does not face the coalition — he brings a piece of it with him.

The floor, the interpreter, and the wall

An anchor says who is right and does not enforce itself. The **floor** is the coercive capacity that makes a verdict land. Most orders run a centralised floor; some run a **distributed** one, in which the bystander coalition does the enforcing itself rather than delegating to a state — and a distributed floor has a hidden condition a centralised one lacks, since its whole enforcing capacity *is* the ability of the many to outweigh the one. It works under rough equality and fails when private power concentrates.

An anchor does not read itself either. Somebody says what it requires, and that class exists for a structural reason: specialisation divides not only labour but knowing, so that in any society past a certain complexity each person must delegate most of what he holds to sources he cannot check, and a position comes into existence between the many and the knowledge they cannot reach. This project calls the occupants the **interpreter class**, and a recent paper argued that they do two separable jobs — telling the apex *no*, which requires that the apex cannot revoke their standing; and making every armed man's title checkable against one source, which requires only that they be singular.

And finally the condition without which none of the above is needed. In 1970 the anthropologist Robert Carneiro proposed that warfare is universal while states are not, and that what distinguishes the places where war produced states is whether the losers could **leave**. In the narrow Peruvian coastal valleys, hemmed by desert and mountain and sea, a defeated village had nowhere to go and was absorbed rather than dispersed, and hierarchy became possible; in the Amazon basin, where beaten groups moved into effectively unlimited forest, the same warfare produced no states for millennia. **Where the defeated can walk away there is nothing to settle, because dispersal is cheaper than subordination for everybody.**

To which this project adds an extension that is the author's rather than Carneiro's and that this paper is largely about: **legal circumscription.** Where geography supplies no walls, states build them in statute. That claim has until now rested on cases — serfdom, the late Roman colonate, household registration — where the binding and the consolidation are so entangled that the causal direction cannot be read. The colonial record is where it can.

Part I — A different kind of evidence

Why the encounter is closer to a census than an archive, and the one bias that makes it dangerous.

This project's immediately preceding work established a problem it could not solve, and it is worth restating because the present material speaks to it directly.

The problem is **survivorship**. The orders this project studies are the ones that lasted long enough to build archives, commission chronicles, cut inscriptions and attract modern scholarship. The camps that dissolved in a decade left nothing. So the corpus is a collection of returning aircraft, and the regularities found in it may be facts about what gets written down rather than facts about what human societies do. Every finding in the project is exposed to that reading, and the remedy proposed was to go looking for the failures in places where somebody else had recorded them.

The colonial encounter is that remedy at a scale the project had not considered, and it is a different class of evidence for four reasons.

It went everywhere. European expansion did not select its subjects by their durability, their monumentality or their literacy. It selected them by where the coast was, where the minerals were, where the strategic road ran. Orders with no writing, no monuments, no capital and no chronicle were surveyed as thoroughly as kingdoms — more thoroughly, in some cases, precisely because they were puzzling.

It recorded structure, not glory. A dynastic chronicle records what a dynasty wished remembered. A district officer's report records who has to be paid, who can deliver labour, whose word is obeyed and by whom, because those were the facts on which his career depended. The colonial archive is full of exactly the information this framework needs — who granted what to whom, on what terms, revocable or not — and it is there not because anyone thought it interesting but because it had to be administered.

The observer had no stake in any particular order's legitimacy. He had an enormous stake in the *fact* of authority and none at all in its rightfulness. That is close to the condition this project's method calls an admissible witness: somebody who cannot profit from the particular verdict, even if he profits from there being one.

And it is roughly simultaneous. Hundreds of orders described within a few decades of one another, by observers using overlapping categories. That is not a sample accumulated by two thousand years of differential preservation. It is closer to a census.

The bias, stated at full strength

None of which makes it clean, and the specific dirtiness is worse than ordinary prejudice, because it runs along the exact axis the framework is trying to measure.

The colonial observer was hunting for a chair. His practical question, everywhere he went, was: with whom do I sign, whom do I depose, whom do I pay, whose order will be obeyed if I make him give it? He was, without knowing it and without any theoretical interest in doing so, scoring political orders on precisely the variable this project cares about — whether authority had pooled into a seizable seat. So the categories in which the record comes to us were generated by an interest that tracks the dependent variable.

That is a serious contamination and it must be held in view throughout. But two things partly limit it, and the limits are what make the instrument usable.

First, the observers' errors run in the direction that weakens the finding, not the direction that manufactures it. The claim under examination is that authority and an interpreter class were present everywhere. An observer looking for a chair and finding none tended to report an *absence* of government — no kings, no law, mere anarchy — which is the opposite of the claim. The Kikuyu case below is exactly this: a real, dense, universally-obeyed authority reported as its absence, because it had no address. The near-census under-reports anchors. When the record nevertheless shows them, the finding survives its own instrument.

Second, the same lens made a mistake in the other direction that is equally revealing. John Hanning Speke reached the court of the Kabaka of Buganda in 1862 carrying a theory in which Africa was ungoverned and priest-ridden and required a government like the one Britain had made in India — and walked into a disciplined monarchy with a graded administration, a council of chiefs, engineered roads, a fleet and a capital. His theory could not credit that to the people he saw building it, so he credited it to a phantom race of lighter-skinned pastoralist conquerors from elsewhere: the Hamitic hypothesis, a discredited racial theory that has since been thoroughly dismantled.

Read structurally rather than merely deplored, that error is informative twice. It shows that the lens registered *contradiction* rather than smoothing it — Speke's own text strains visibly against what he was looking at, and the strain is preserved. And it shows the direction in which the record must be corrected: **where a European reported a state he could not explain, there was a state; where he reported no authority at all, there was authority he could not locate.** Both errors run against the observer's theory and in favour of the thing observed.

So the instrument is dangerous and it is the best available, and the honest position is to use it while stating, at every point where it matters, that the categories were supplied by men whose behaviour the framework is simultaneously trying to explain.

Part II — The recursion: nobody found a baseline

Two former conquests, one with a throne and one without.

Take the finding first in the form the record delivers it.

Buganda was a conquest state, and knew it. Ganda tradition carries two founding stories and does not reconcile them. In the older, the first Kabaka is **Kintu**, who came from outside, defeated a tyrant, gathered the original clans under a single crown and vanished — a founder-conqueror in the plainest sense, the man who turned a scatter of lineages into a kingdom. In the competing tradition the founder is **Kimera**, a prince connected to the older power of Bunyoro-Kitara to the west, so that Buganda begins as a breakaway shard of its great rival. Modern reconstructions differ and place the kingdom's emergence somewhere in the range of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, treating the king-lists as material to be read against the grain rather than as chronicle.

What the two stories share is what matters: a memory that the kingdom **had a beginning**, that it was made by a conqueror out of materials that pre-existed it, and that the making was retold and amplified in every reign since. Nor was the conquering finished. Across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a compact, aggressive Buganda expanded at the expense of the ageing Bunyoro-Kitara, annexing county after county until the offshoot eclipsed the parent — and two of the counties Buganda held when the British arrived had been taken from Bunyoro within living memory, a grievance that would fester for another seventy years.

The Kikuyu order was a conquest too, and a more recent one. The highland forests had been the country of earlier peoples whom Kikuyu tradition remembers as the Gumba, the Athi and the Dorobo — hunter-gatherers who worked iron and kept bees, and whom the tradition credits with teaching the incomers to smelt. The Kikuyu expansion overlaid them ridge by ridge across centuries and by every means at once: by purchase, since it was from the Athi that the incoming lineages bought the right to the Kiambu land; by intermarriage and absorption; and, where it came to that, by war, until by the middle of the nineteenth century the Gumba had ceased to exist as a people distinct from those who had swallowed them.

Nothing about either order was a baseline. Both were builds that had taken. And in both, the taking had gone all the way: the *githaka* and the age-set and the covenant of the first man and woman with the god on the snow mountain were not a policy anyone recalled adopting, any more than the Kabakaship was; they were simply the shape of the world, defended sincerely and for nothing by people who would have been astonished to hear the arrangement called an arrangement.

What follows, and what does not

The finding is that **a conqueror never meets an innocent condition, only an earlier build that took** — and the temptation is to treat this as profound when part of it is trivial. Any order has a history; any history involves somebody displacing somebody. Stated that loosely the claim reduces to the observation that time passes.

The non-trivial version is narrower and is what the near-census actually supports:

> *In a body of contemporaneous observations covering hundreds of societies of every scale and technology,* ***no society was found without a source of rightfulness that people deferred to and somebody who read it.*** *The variation was in how the reading was organised, not in whether there was one.*

That is falsifiable, and it could have come out otherwise. A society could have been found in which holdings were assigned by present strength alone, re-checked continuously, with no standard cited and no specialist consulted. The framework says such an arrangement is possible but unstable — it is what the framework calls warlordism, and its whole argument is that warlordism is a condition orders pass through rather than rest in. If a large stable population had been found living in it, the framework would be in serious difficulty. None was.

And the second-order point defends the first: **the observers' incentives ran against the finding.** A district officer who could report that a people had no authority at all was reporting a people who required no treaty, no payment and no negotiation, and could simply be administered. The record's most confident claims of absent government are the ones that later scholarship has most thoroughly overturned. When a biased instrument reports a pattern *against* its own bias, the pattern is the more credible.

What the recursion does **not** license is the reading that conquest and settlement are two different kinds of thing. They are two points on one clock. Buganda in 1890 was what a conquest looks like after five centuries of formation; the British protectorate of

1900 was what one looks like in year zero, and it never travelled the distance. That contrast is much of what this paper measures.

Part III — Buganda: the apex that authored everything

Sole authorship arrived at independently, and a solution to the succession problem this project had not catalogued.

By the middle of the nineteenth century Buganda was a state in every functional sense. At its head stood the Kabaka, and the two titles his subjects gave him name the two halves of his position exactly: *ssaabasajja*, the head of all men, the father and source of all authority; and *ssaabataka*, the head of all the clan-heads, the final arbiter above every lineage. Beneath him sat the *Lukiiko*, the great council of chiefs; beneath that a graded territorial administration — the *bakungu* who governed the counties as appointees of the crown, and the *batongole*, royal agents planted through the country to watch, tax and levy. There were ten or twelve counties by the late nineteenth century, a capital of royal enclosures and tombs on the hills that would become Kampala, broad deliberately engineered roads, a fleet of war-canoes that made the lake a Ganda highway, and an economy of barkcloth, iron and plantain gardens worked by a peasantry that owed labour and tribute upward.

Two features of that order are the subject of this part.

The first: chieftaincy was appointive

A series of kabakas across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had broken the power of the old hereditary clan-heads and replaced them with a **service nobility that held office at the king's pleasure** — promotable, demotable, dismissible at his word, and unable securely to pass its position to its sons.

Set that beside the framework's operational claim and it is the sole-authorship condition satisfied about as completely as an agrarian state can satisfy it. No chief's holding survived the king's displeasure; no chief could create an owner; a man's standing came from one place and could be returned to it. Which is the same solution reached, with no contact and no possible transmission, by the Ottoman *kul* system that made an entire governing class incapable of founding lineages; by imperial China's ban on inherited office, rotation of officials and prohibition on serving in home districts; and by the Ethiopian *gult*, which gave the armed elite conditional, office-linked tenure while hereditary right stayed with northern peasant lineages.

That is now a fifth independent instance of the corpus's most checkable proposition, and the first from sub-Saharan Africa. It matters more than a confirmation usually would, because the proposition is stated in a form that could have failed: *who could grant heritable holdings to armed men* is a question with a documentary answer in any administered order, and in Buganda the answer was nobody but the Kabaka.

The second: the royal children took their mother's clan

The rule that makes Buganda worth a section rather than a paragraph is this. **By Ganda practice the children of a Kabaka took the clan of their mother, not their father**, so that no royal clan could form to monopolise the throne, and every one of the kingdom's clans might in principle mother a king.

To see what that does, take the problem it solves. Every bloodline anchor this project has examined is **determinate about the lineage and silent about the member.** Descent from Solomon says who may reign and not which of them; descent from Genghis says the same; descent in the Ashina clan said the same and the First Türk Khaganate broke apart at its first contested succession because nothing else said anything. The anchor thereby manufactures a *pool of claimants* — and every order running one has had to manage the pool. The corpus's catalogue of management is a catalogue of brutality and expedient: fratricide on accession; confinement of surplus princes on a mountain for life; election by an assembly; designation; lot.

Buganda used none of them, and what it did instead is not on the list, because it is not a patch. **It dissolved the claimants' coalition capacity rather than the claimants.** The princes still existed. What did not exist was any clan with a stake in a particular prince, because each prince belonged to his mother's clan and no clan could ever hold the throne as its own. A magnate asking himself whether to back a claimant found no lineage interest pointing at one — and found, instead, that his clan's interest lay in the Kabakaship continuing to exist, since any clan might mother the next king.

Read against the bystander mechanism, that is remarkable. The framework says an anchor works by making an attack on any title an attack on the ground beneath all of them, so that the coalition forms from identical self-interest. Buganda ran that mechanism **through kinship rather than through title**: every clan held a live claim on the future of the monarchy and none held a claim on its present occupant, so an attack on the Kabakaship threatened everyone's ticket and no clan's candidate.

It is also, structurally, the *kul* logic applied to the royal family instead of the administration. The Ottomans built a governing class that could found no lineages; Buganda built a dynasty that had no clan. And the two mechanisms sat in the same

order at the same time, aimed one level apart: appointive chieftaincy prevented the administration from hardening into rival lineages, and matriclan descent prevented the royal family from hardening into a faction.

This project's method paper lists, among the cases that would most test the framework, a non-patrilineal succession order, on the grounds that every bloodline case so far runs through fathers. Buganda is not quite that — the throne descends through the father — but it is the more interesting object, and it should be entered in the ledger as a **third class of solution to the determinacy problem**: not elimination of claimants, not selection among them, but the removal of the coalitions that would otherwise form behind them.

And the floor withdrawn

The last thing to record about the near shore is that the belief had taken. The floor beneath it had been anything but gentle — Mutesa I, who reigned from 1856 to 1884, is remembered in Ganda tradition by a name meaning *the one who causes to weep*, earned in the killings that opened his reign, and European visitors recorded casual executions and a discipline maintained by the credible nearness of death. But by the nineteenth century that floor had largely withdrawn to the margins, because the ordinary Muganda did not obey the king mainly from fear of the executioner. He held the monarchy as the order of the world, policed its deferences himself, and would have found a Buganda without a Kabaka very nearly unthinkable.

That is the self-running condition, and it is the single fact that determined everything the British were subsequently able to do — **because an order held up by its subjects' own conviction is an order a conqueror can seize at the top without having to hold down the bottom.**

Part IV — The Kikuyu: the order that refused a seat

Two mechanisms for keeping power from pooling, and the answer to a question this project has been carrying since Iceland.

A few hundred miles east, on the ridges below the snow mountain, the same problem had been solved the other way, and the solution is the more instructive of the two because it is the one this project has been unable to document properly.

The order

The unit was the *mbari*: a patrilineal lineage of anywhere from a few dozen to a few hundred people, tracing descent from a common ancestor and holding a *githaka* — an estate cleared from the forest and held as the collective and in principle inalienable property of the lineage, a man's cultivation being a right of use within it rather than a title he could sell out from under the dead and the unborn. Each *githaka* was governed by a council of its senior men under a *mūramati*, a trustee whose standing rested on seniority and the confidence of his people and **passed to no son by right.** Above the lineage stood the clan, nine of them in the people's own account, descended from the daughters of the first man and woman whom the god on the mountain had settled on the land.

Cutting across all of it ran the age-set. Boys circumcised together entered adulthood together as a *riika*, a bond of fraternal solidarity that ran alongside kinship and often against it; the age-sets fed the *kiama*, councils of circumcised senior men who were at once legislature, court and ritual authority of the ridge, and above them the *athamaki*, respected spokesmen whose weight in a wider assembly rested on proven judgement and open-handedness and on no office they held.

And there it stopped. No paramount chief, no capital, no treasury, no standing army. For a war or a great dispute a force was assembled out of the councils and the regiments and then dissolved again. **Authority was entirely real and it was everywhere at once**, and it lived in no single place a stranger could ride to and take.

The two mechanisms

The Kikuyu faced the same problem every order faces one level up from the ruled: each generation breeds more capable, ambitious men than any centre can seat, and the capacity that makes such a man useful is the capacity that makes him a rival. They answered it twice, and neither answer built a throne.

The first was rotation. Power over the society as a whole was held not by a person but by a whole generation — a ruling generation-set — and handed on, entire, to the next in a ceremony called the ***ituīka***, the two great alternating generations exchanging the authority of the country roughly every thirty years. Tradition places the last full handover around the close of the nineteenth century; the next fell due in the mid-1920s and was never held, under an administration that had no notion what it was.

The mechanism is worth stating precisely because it is not merely a term limit. **Power that is scheduled to be surrendered on a fixed and publicly known cycle cannot pool into a permanent seat, because everyone alive knows it is coming due.** A man accumulating a following is accumulating it against a clock every one of his followers can also read, which changes what the following is worth to them.

The second was export. An *mbari* that grew too large for its ground threw off its surplus outward: younger sons and ambitious men bought or cleared new *githaka* further out, raised fortified pioneer villages at the forest edge, and became the founding ancestors of new lineages. **The ridge of ambition led out into forest, not up toward a centre.** And this was not an antique memory when the British came — reconstructed age-set lists put the southward frontier around what is now Nairobi as reached only in the late eighteenth century, with the outermost pioneer villages of Kiambu founded by warriors initiated a century or so before the railway. The machine was still running when the railway arrived to stop it.

The answer to the Iceland question

This project has carried an unanswered question since it worked the Icelandic Commonwealth — a genuine anchor, the recited law, with no executive of any kind, running three centuries on a distributed floor, and then collapsing when private power concentrated in the hands of a few great families.

The finding entered into the framework at the time was that **a distributed floor works only under rough equality and fails when private power concentrates**, because its whole enforcing capacity *is* the ability of the many to outweigh the one. What the framework could not say was where the rough equality comes from. It was treated, in effect, as an initial condition — a lucky configuration that erodes.

The Kikuyu case says it is not a condition but a **maintenance programme**, and names two mechanisms by which it is run: scheduled surrender of authority, and venting of surplus ambition down an open frontier. Neither is an accident of terrain. The *ituīka* is a designed institution with a calendar, and the pioneer expansion is a practice with a documented direction.

Which converts a static claim into a prediction with a shape. **A distributed floor should hold as long as its anti-concentration mechanisms run, and become unreproducible when they stop** — and the failure should follow the stopping rather than accompany any decline in belief.

The Kikuyu case supplies the test and, awkwardly, is disqualified from being evidence for it. Both mechanisms stopped at almost the same moment, and both were stopped from outside: the frontier was closed by the railway, the reserve boundary and the alienation of the highlands, and the *ituīka* due in the mid-1920s was never held under an administration that would not have permitted it had it understood. The order did not fail; it was killed. This project's own discipline is strict about the difference — an order broken from outside is not a test of its settlement, any more than a demolished building is a test of its foundations — so the Kikuyu case cannot be counted as a distributed floor that held.

What it *can* be counted as is a documented instance of the mechanisms, which is what the framework lacked. The Iceland gap is closed on the mechanism side and remains open on the evidence side, and that is the honest statement of it.

And a note on the interpreters

One further observation, because it bears on a scale this paper corrects later.

The *kiama* elders were the interpreters of the Kikuyu order and they were simultaneously its principals — the senior men of the lineages, the parties to the disputes they judged. On the axis this project has recently proposed, which asks how far the interpreter's credential sits from the men competing, that is the closest possible position: the reader is the claimant.

And it did not produce the fragility that position produces elsewhere, for a reason the axis itself names. Credential distance matters because the audience cannot check the anchor for itself; where the anchor is publicly verifiable, distance matters less, because the audience is the check. On a Kikuyu ridge **everything relevant was checkable by everyone**: which *riika* a man belonged to, who was his senior, where his lineage's *githaka* ended, whether he had behaved as a man of the *mbari* should. There was no esoteric content, no dead language, no calendar requiring twenty years of

training, and therefore no gap for an interpreter to be independent *within*. The anchor was thin, public and universally legible, and an anchor like that needs no distant priest.

Part V — The wall built in statute

Carneiro run as an experiment, with a treatment date and surviving minutes.

Now the part of the paper that its author has been hunting for, and that the colonial record supplies better than anything else in the archive.

Carneiro's claim is that hierarchy forms where the defeated cannot leave. The claim has been criticised since publication and fairly: several primary states fit it awkwardly, and bounded fertile land is also the land most worth fighting over and most easily taxed, so the correlation is compatible with other stories. This project's extension — that where geography gives no walls, states build them in law — has had the same problem in a worse form. Serfdom hardened alongside Muscovite consolidation; the late Roman colonate accompanied a state already strong enough to enforce it. In every case the binding and the consolidation arrive together, and one cannot tell whether the wall made the hierarchy or the hierarchy built the wall.

The Kikuyu highlands supply the clean version, because the exit was open, then it was closed, and we have the file.

Before: the exit open, the hierarchy flat

The pre-colonial Kikuyu order is Carneiro's Amazon rather than his Peru. Land was available, the forest frontier was moving, and the specific institutional expression of that availability is the *export* mechanism of Part IV: ambitious men who could not be accommodated within a lineage went and cleared a new one. The order accordingly never concentrated, and it never had to.

That is the framework's prediction running forward, not backward: where the defeated — or merely the crowded, or the ambitious, or the disaffected — can walk away, no settlement is required, so none forms, and authority stays distributed because nothing compels it to pool. Five centuries of it.

The treatment

Then the exit was closed, deliberately, in a sequence of measures each of which was argued for in writing.

The frontier was shut. A railway was driven six hundred miles inland from the coast, finished in 1901, at a cost that made it a byword for folly in Parliament before it earned a shilling. Built for a strategy that had lapsed by the time it was completed, it left a debt, and the temperate highlands it climbed through became the answer to the bill. The land was alienated to European settlers, the African population confined to defined reserves, and the direction of surplus ambition — outward, to new ground — was simply removed.

A tax was imposed that could only be paid in a currency obtainable in one way. The hut tax came in 1901 and the poll tax in 1910. They were presented as ordinary levies and their design was a labour whip, and the mechanism was the currency: the tax was payable in coin, and coin was a thing an ordinary Kikuyu could obtain only by leaving his land and selling his labour to a European. A self-sufficient cultivator who grew his own food and needed no wages was converted, by the tax, into a man who had to earn cash he could not otherwise use.

The colony's own governors said so without embarrassment. Sir Percy Girouard stated that taxation was **"the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve to seek work."** That is not an inference by a later analyst. It is the instrument's purpose stated by the man imposing it.

The rate climbed to around sixteen shillings a year by 1920, and collection was timed to the seasons when settler demand for hands was highest, so the tax fell due exactly when the coffee needed picking. Default was met with forced labour on public works or imprisonment under a Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1906 that made breaking a labour contract a criminal offence. And the asymmetry names whom the instrument was for: the African paid a hut tax from 1901; the European paid his first direct tax in 1913.

Officials were instructed to push. In 1919 the Governor issued a circular instructing that all government officials in charge of native areas must exercise **"every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied male natives to go into the labour field,"** and that where European farms lay near a native area, women and children too should be encouraged out to such labour as they could perform. When it reached London it caused a scandal, because forced labour for private gain had been explicitly disavowed; a corrective despatch followed in 1921 and the Governor was reprimanded. The language was reworded. The labour was not.

Movement was fixed to the body. The Native Registration Ordinance was passed in 1915 and enforced from 1919, requiring every African male of sixteen to be fingerprinted and to receive a certificate sealed in a small copper container worn by law on a chain at his neck. It held his fingerprints, his tribe, a physical description and his

employment history, including his employers' remarks on his conduct — remarks that fixed his wage and decided whether he would be hired again. More than a million were issued by 1932. Africans called it the *kipande*, and settlers were never subject to it.

And independent production was forbidden. Coffee was the colony's leading cash crop by 1913 and grew best in the Kikuyu heartland, and Africans were barred by law from growing it. The stated reasons were disease and quality. The reasons in the settlers' own lobbying were that a Kikuyu who grew coffee for cash no longer needed to labour on a European farm, and that a Kikuyu who grew coffee was a competitor in the same market.

Why this is an experiment and not an illustration

Four features make the Kenya material do what the serfdom cases cannot.

The direction of the tax is a signature, and it is inverted here. A settled order taxes to keep the producer producing on his own ground: it takes a share of the harvest and leaves him the land, because it needs him there and yielding. This colony taxed to pull the producer **off** his ground, because it did not need him on his own land at all. Same instrument, opposite vector, and the vector is the whole meaning. Wherever legal circumscription has been alleged before, the tax pointed the ordinary way and the argument had to be reconstructed. Here the officials wrote the vector down.

A prohibition is a confession of capability. A man is not forbidden to do what he cannot do, and the colony's own conduct settles the question past argument: where Kikuyu had planted coffee before the restriction hardened, an agricultural officer had the trees uprooted; and when African coffee was at last grudgingly permitted from the later 1930s and in earnest only after 1954, it was not merely allowed but **capped**, the African grower held to a few hundred trees where a settler estate ran to many thousands. You do not uproot a useless crop, and you do not cap a man at a few hundred trees unless you have measured what he would do with a few thousand.

The counterfactual is next door and its books survive. Uganda had no settler colony to speak of; the British there ran extraction through a native kingdom and African smallholders on their own ground, and grew cotton and then coffee. In 1934 Uganda's exports came to about three and a half million pounds, overwhelmingly African-grown; Kenya's that year came to under two million, of which barely three hundred thousand was African production at all. The settler colony, holding the finest temperate highland in East Africa and every legal advantage its law could confer, exported less than half what smallholder Uganda did.

So the closing of the exit was not a revenue-maximising strategy that happened to be brutal. **It cost the colony money it could plainly have had, and it was preferred**

anyway, because what it bought was not revenue but a supply of labour that had nowhere else to go. Which is precisely Carneiro's mechanism, chosen deliberately, at a measured price, by men who wrote down why.

And the costume it wore identifies it. Where the coercion pressed hardest, the dress was most traditional. Unpaid labour was extracted under the name of *communal labour*, presented as the survival of an African tradition of collective work — and was neither communal, being taken for government and settler works, nor voluntary. The Kikuyu had a real practice of land-lending, the *ahoi*, tenants permitted to cultivate an underused portion of a lineage's estate in return for gifts and redeemable when the land was wanted; the colony took the outward shape of that redeemable tenancy and poured a different content into it, contracting the resident labourer to work a settler's land a fixed number of days a year, then ratcheting the requirement upward year by year toward two hundred and seventy days, forbidding stock, capping cultivation at two acres to a family, and in 1939 stripping the last tenancy rights, so that the squatter held nothing but a labour contract on ground his fathers had cleared.

The rule reads cleanly off the case and is worth banking: **the more coercive the item, the more traditional the costume it is dressed in**, because a coercion wearing the mask of the people's own custom is cheaper to impose and harder to resent aloud.

What this establishes, and what it does not

It establishes that legal circumscription is real, deliberate, and can precede rather than follow the hierarchy it enables — because in Kenya the walls were built *first*, by an administration that had no native hierarchy to inherit and was in the process of manufacturing one. That is the causal direction the serfdom cases could not supply.

It does not establish that legal circumscription works the same way where a state is binding its own long-settled population rather than a conquered one, and the difference may matter: a colonial administration closing an exit is not obviously doing the same thing as a Muscovite state hardening a tenure it already administered. The Kenyan case gives the mechanism a clean instance and leaves its generality where it was.

Part VI — The conqueror's move is downstream

Redirect and forge, and a chair that nobody knelt to.

Now the matched pair delivers its result.

In Buganda the British redirected. They did not build a floor across a large population, because they never needed to. They captured an apex that already ran — arriving into a factional civil war among the kingdom's Protestant, Catholic and Muslim parties, backing one faction with a machine-gun, and then leasing the kingdom's own army to conquer its neighbours. The Kabakaship was left standing, its sacred authority intact and re-dyed Christian, its chiefly administration continuing to collect and command, and the belief of a whole kingdom pointed at the new arrangement. The order held its own subjects, as it always had, and the conqueror collected through it.

In the Kikuyu highlands the British had to forge. When the same empire looked for the counterpart it knew how to handle — the king to depose or keep on a leash, the court to occupy, the tax machine to inherit — it found the ridges, the councils, a trustee with no heir, and a generation that would hand itself over on a schedule no European had heard of. A few hundred miles west and a few years earlier, a British force had walked into a Muslim caliphate, announced that its emirs would henceforth be appointed by the conqueror, and gone on running a believed apparatus of tax and command with a handful of officers over millions of people. The men on these ridges had nowhere to send the announcement.

The forged chair, and why it must be staffed from the discards

What they did instead is the sharpest single sequence in either study, and it is the framework's own prohibition seen from the other side.

The company first dealt with **Waiyaki wa Hinga**, a wealthy frontier elder with a fortified homestead, and — misreading a prominent big-man for a sovereign — took him for the paramount chief of the Kikuyu, a rank that did not exist. Relations soured; in 1892, after a failed punitive expedition and a quarrel with a company officer, Waiyaki was struck down, arrested, and sent under guard toward the coast for trial. He never

arrived. The first man Britain mistook for the Kikuyu's chief died in its custody in chains.

Over that grave the colony raised its actual instrument, and he was the old order's castoff. **Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu** had been disowned by his own lineage — a wayward younger man whose conduct had cost his relatives too much in compensation — and had attached himself to Waiyaki as a *njaguti*, a servant, before hiring on to the company as a porter. When his master died, the servant made himself useful to the men who had killed him: guide, intelligence agent, garrison supplier, and leader of punitive columns against Kikuyu who resisted. From 1902 he was selling Kiambu land to the first white settlers; in 1908 he was made a senior chief; after the war he became the only man ever to hold the invented title of paramount chief of the Kikuyu; he took the King's Medal for Chiefs in 1922, was presented to a visiting duke around 1925, and was consulted on the appointment of other chiefs until his death in 1929.

The earlier study's finding on this is exactly right and the framework can say why in its own terms. **A forged chair must be filled by someone the old order does not command**, because a man the old order still holds will answer to it and not to the forger; and the readiest such man is precisely the one the old order has cast out, who owes it nothing and will take from the newcomer the standing his own people denied him. The disowned servant is not an unlucky choice of collaborator. He is the structurally correct one.

And the price of building a chair that way is stated in a sentence the framework could have written: **Kinyanjui was obeyed because the British were obeyed.** Take the British away and there was no reason for a Kikuyu to defer to Waiyaki's disgraced servant at all.

That is possession dressed as ownership, in a colonial administrative record. Kinyanjui's title had exactly one author, and the author was a competitor for the thing being distributed — which is the framework's central prohibition, and which means the title was worth the author's current strength and not a shilling more. The British spent sixty years and an enormous continuous expense trying to manufacture in Kenya what Buganda already possessed, and never arrived, and the framework says they could not have: **an author who is a party to the contest cannot confer a title that outlives him**, and no amount of medal, ordinance and gazette changes that.

The cost asymmetry, measured

The two colonies therefore ran on opposite economies, and the difference is visible in the objects each produced.

Buganda's belief column was full — not with belief in the British, but with belief in the Kabakaship the British had captured. The order therefore held its own people, and the coercive apparatus at the centre stayed small. Where the force went instead was to the edges: onto the peoples the Baganda chiefs were sent to conquer on Britain's behalf, and above all onto Bunyoro, which was ruined.

Kenya's belief column was empty, and the whole weight of holding the ordinary man fell on the cost column, which had to be built high and kept manned at a continuous and rising expense. The *kipande* is that expense made into an object. **It is a portable file** — the externalised memory a colony must carry because it cannot trust the man to stay where he is wanted or to hold himself there by his own conviction. An order whose legitimating story had taken would not need it, because the believed subject keeps his own account and polices himself for nothing, which is the entire economy of a story that works. The tag weighs precisely what conviction would have carried for free.

And the ruling race ran the confirming experiment without meaning to. For three decades the tag hung only on African necks. In the late 1940s the Colonial Office moved to make registration universal — all races fingerprinted, one regime — and the settlers rose against it. A device that had been ordinary administrative convenience while it hung on the African became, the instant the ruling race was asked to submit to it, an intolerable affront. One race wore it for thirty years as the condition of being allowed to work at all; the other treated the prospect of being fingerprinted once as an outrage. **A thing that is a badge of subjection when worn by the ruled and an unbearable indignity when asked of the rulers has been identified by the rulers' own recoil.**

Part VII — What 1900 did to Buganda

Preserving the robe and moving the authorship, and a bill that fell due sixty-six years later.

The Buganda settlement looks, on its face, like the gentlest arrangement in this project's colonial material, and its gentleness is genuine in the sense that matters least. The framework can name what it actually did, and the naming explains an ending the earlier study reports without fully accounting for.

The Uganda Agreement of 1900 converted Ganda chieftaincy from what it had been into freehold. Estates measured in square miles — the *mailo* — were granted to the Kabaka, the regents and roughly a thousand chiefs, and granted in the legal form of land *already in possession*, which is the standard grammar of a settlement that wishes to look like a recognition. A service nobility became a landed one.

Read against Part III, that is the destruction of the one thing that had made the Ganda order work.

Before 1900, a chief's holding came from the Kabaka, was revocable at his word, and could not be securely passed to a son. The Kabaka was the sole author of every chief's title, and the whole apparatus of the kingdom rested on it. After 1900, a chief held freehold land that the Kabaka had not granted and could not revoke — held, in the last analysis, of the Crown.

A second author of title had appeared, which the framework identifies as the ordinary lethal event, and it had appeared in the disguise the framework says it usually wears: not as a rupture but as a reward, a generous confirmation of what the chiefs supposedly already held.

So the accurate description of 1900 is not that it preserved the kingdom. **It preserved the robe and moved the authorship.** The Kabaka remained the object of a whole people's conviction and ceased to be the author of any powerful man's holding.

That configuration is one this project has met before, in a place with no possible connection to it. The Hawaiian kapu system was an ancient, ferociously enforced, universally held anchor that made an entire population render tribute cheaply for centuries — and it authored no elite title whatever, because chiefly lands were re-granted by each new paramount at accession. A recent paper drew the general finding from it: **anchor quality and the coordination of armed men are independent, because the coordinating work is not a property of the anchor but of the relation between an anchor and an author of title.**

Buganda after 1900 is that configuration produced by administrative act rather than by inheritance, and it predicts what the kingdom's remaining history shows. Enormous popular devotion, entirely real — a Kabaka deported in 1953 and returned in triumph, a mass political movement organised around the throne. And no settlement underneath the devotion, because the men with land no longer held it from the man they revered. The kingdom that could fill a road with its people could not survive 1966, and the earlier study's formulation — that the preservation which spared the kingdom was the same act that made it unintegrable and in the end destroyed it — is right, and this is the mechanism under it.

One qualification, stated because the case does not fully support the stronger claim. The Kabaka retained real authority after 1900 and the *mailo* grant did not instantly hollow the kingship; the chiefs remained his chiefs in a hundred practical ways, and the metropolitan power stood behind the arrangement for half a century. What the framework claims is narrower: that the *authorship* moved in 1900, that authorship is what a settlement runs on, and that an order whose ceremonial centre and whose author of title have come apart is living on a stock it can no longer replenish. Sixty-six years is a long time to live on a stock, and it is not forever.

Part VIII — Two corrections and one thing that survived

What this material does to the project's recent papers.

The correction: the credential axis presupposes a seat

A short time ago this project proposed a single variable — how far the interpreter's credential sits from the men competing — scored on three positions. **Fused**, where the claimant is his own interpreter. **Domestic**, where a separate interpretive class exists whose qualification the ruler issues. **Foreign**, where the qualification comes from outside every domestic claimant's reach. The scale was argued to predict three things: whether a ruler can be restrained, whether armed peers can be coordinated, and whether a broken authority can be repaired; and the fused position was said to fail at the first genuinely contested succession, because if every claimant reads the anchor there are as many sources of title as claimants.

The Kikuyu order scores fused. The *kiama* elders were the interpreters and simultaneously the principals. And it did not fail at a contested succession — it ran five centuries and was killed from outside.

The reason is not that the prediction is wrong. It is that the prediction **does not apply**, and the paper failed to say so. "Who can revoke the interpreter's qualification" presupposes that there is a qualification and that there is an office to be succeeded to. A headless order has neither. The variable is not refuted by the Kikuyu case; it is **undefined** for it.

So the scale requires a stated precondition: **it is a scale for orders that have an apex.** And that in turn reveals that the paper had silently conflated two questions that need separating:

Where is the credential issued? — which governs restraint, coordination and repair *within* a hierarchy, and is the axis the earlier paper defined.

Has authority pooled into a seat at all? — which is a prior question, governs whether the first one can even be asked, and, as this paper's matched pair shows, is what determines what a conqueror can do.

They are orthogonal. Buganda, the Classic Maya, Hawaii and the First Türk Khaganate are all fused, and Buganda has a seat while the Kikuyu do not. The two

variables have been travelling together in the corpus because most of the archive is hierarchies, and the colonial near-census is where they come apart.

The thing that survived, unexpectedly

The earlier paper carried one modifier, written to prevent overreach: that credential distance matters *because* the audience cannot check the anchor, so where the anchor is publicly verifiable the distance matters less. The instances given were the Icelandic law recited aloud each summer and the Venetian electoral lottery drawn in public.

The Kikuyu case was not available when that was written and it fits without adjustment. Age-set membership, seniority, lineage boundary, a man's standing on the ridge — all of it checkable by everyone, none of it esoteric, no dead language and no twenty-year training. **A thin, public, universally legible anchor needs no distant priest**, and the Kikuyu order is a third independent instance of the modifier working. That is worth recording because the modifier was the part of that paper I was least confident in.

And a gap half-closed

The Iceland question — where does the rough equality that a distributed floor requires come from — now has a mechanism (scheduled surrender, frontier venting) and still has no clean case, because the Kikuyu order was broken from outside and this project does not count conquest as evidence about a settlement. Half-closed is the accurate description and it should be entered as such rather than as a result.

Part IX — Predictions

Stated so that they can fail.

P1 — The conqueror's move is a function of the seat, not of his disposition. Across conquests by a single power in a single period, the treatment of conquered authorities should sort by whether the conquered order had pooled authority into a seizable office, not by the conqueror's stated policy, the conquered people's resistance, or the terrain. *Falsified if* a single power in a single period treats seat-bearing and headless orders alike, or treats seat-bearing orders differently from one another on grounds unrelated to the seat.

P2 — The cost of a hold is inversely proportional to the belief the conqueror inherited. A conquest that captures a self-running order should show a small central coercive apparatus and its force displaced to the frontier; a conquest that inherits no belief should show a large, permanent, rising internal apparatus, and specifically the appearance of *portable identity documents* — the externalised memory that substitutes for a subject who does not keep his own account. *Falsified if* inherited-belief colonies show comparable internal surveillance to forged ones.

P3 — A forged collaborating elite is recruited from the old order's outcasts. Where a conquering power must manufacture an intermediary, the men it raises should disproportionately be those the prior order had marginalised, disinherited or expelled — and the arrangement should be brittle in proportion, collapsing when the external force behind it is withdrawn. *Falsified if* forged elites are drawn typically from the prior order's own established authorities and prove durable without continuing external support.

P4 — A prohibition is a confession of capability, and its removal dates the confession. Where an order forbids a subject population an activity on grounds of incapacity, evidence of capability should be found in the order's own enforcement behaviour, and the prohibition should be lifted precisely when the order's interest changes rather than when the capability does. *Falsified if* prohibitions of this kind are lifted on evidence of newly acquired capability rather than on changed interest.

P5 — Legal circumscription runs the tax vector backwards. Where a state is binding a population to supply labour rather than to supply produce, taxation should be designed to push the producer *off* his ground rather than to keep him productive on it, and the design should be visible in the currency of payment and the timing of

collection. *Falsified if* labour-extracting orders tax in kind, or time collection independently of labour demand.

P6 — Coercion wears its most traditional costume where it presses hardest. Within a single colonial order, the items of the cost column should correlate positively between degree of compulsion and degree of claimed native customary origin. *Falsified if* the most coercive impositions are the ones most frankly presented as innovations.

P7 — Moving the authorship hollows an order on a generational delay. Where a conquering power preserves a ceremonial apex while transferring the authorship of elite title to itself, the order should retain high popular devotion and lose the capacity to hold its own elite, and should fail at a moment when the external guarantee lapses rather than when devotion declines. *Falsified if* such orders fail as their popular support fails, or retain elite cohesion after authorship has moved.

P8 — Anti-concentration mechanisms are the maintenance programme of a distributed floor. Durable headless orders should be found to possess identifiable institutions that prevent authority pooling — scheduled surrender, mandatory rotation, exit to a frontier, redistributive levelling — and should become unreproducible when those institutions stop, whether the stopping is internal or imposed. *Falsified if* durable headless orders are commonly found without such mechanisms, or persist after they lapse.

And the architecture fails as a whole if this is found: **a contact-era society of substantial size and durability in which holdings were assigned by present strength alone, with no cited standard and no consulted specialist.** The near-census is the place to look, and it is a real search rather than a rhetorical one, because the observers' incentives ran toward reporting exactly that.

Part X — Where this is weak

Nine problems, two of which reach the paper's foundations.

The evidence was assembled in a different framework, to answer its questions. Both case studies were produced in this project under a related but distinct apparatus — floor, robe, settlement, cost column, seam, default, the menu, the chair — and the facts they foreground are the facts that apparatus wanted. Its chair/no-chair distinction is close enough to this paper's seat question that I may be rediscovering a variable the source already sorted for, rather than testing anything. The two findings I am most confident are genuinely new here — the Ganda matriclan rule and the *ituīka* as an anti-concentration institution — are the two neither framework was hunting for, which is weak comfort and is the best I have.

The census bias runs along the measured axis, and Part I's mitigation is partial rather than sufficient. The colonial observer was hunting for a seat; the seat is the paper's independent variable; the record's categories were therefore generated by an interest in the thing being measured. That the observers' errors run against the finding limits the damage and does not remove it.

Two cases is not a test. They are a matched pair chosen because they are matched, in a corpus assembled by the person making the argument. Everything in Part IX is a prediction and nothing in Parts III to VII is a demonstration of one.

The recursion claim is weaker than it sounds. "Every order was a former conquest" is close to trivial in its loose form, and the non-trivial form — that no contact-era society lacked an anchor and an interpreter — is doing all the work while resting on a negative. Nobody has assembled the near-census systematically for this question. Until somebody does, the claim rests on the absence of counter-examples in a literature nobody has searched for them.

Legal circumscription is established for a colonial administration and not for a state binding its own people. A conqueror closing an exit around a subject population may not be doing the same thing as a state hardening tenure over subjects it already governs, and the Kenyan case supplies the causal direction only for the former.

Carneiro remains contested, and the highlands case does not settle the original argument. It shows that a state *chose* to close an exit for the reason Carneiro's model implies, which is evidence about the mechanism's availability and not about its role in primary state formation.

The Buganda authorship claim may be over-dated. I have placed the decisive change in 1900 and there is a case that *mailo* took decades to hollow the kingship, that the Kabaka's practical authority remained substantial into the 1950s, and that the collapse of 1966 owes more to the politics of a new independent state than to a land settlement made two generations earlier. The framework's answer — that the stock was drawn down slowly — is exactly the shape of an unfalsifiable save, and I would rather flag it as one than defend it.

The Kikuyu case cannot count as evidence for the mechanism it names, since the order was broken from outside. Part IV says so and it should be repeated here, because the temptation to use it as a positive instance is strong and the project's own discipline forbids it.

And the deepest problem: the instrument was built by the people whose behaviour the paper explains. This is not the ordinary complaint that colonial sources are prejudiced. It is that the framework's central independent variable — whether the order had a seat — is a category the colonial administration *invented in the course of acting on it*, and the record exists because they acted on it. A district officer who found no chief made one, and then wrote reports about the chief. The archive of headless orders is, disproportionately, the archive of what was done to them once they were classified as headless. Whether a genuinely independent measurement of pre-contact political structure is available anywhere is a question I cannot answer, and the honest status of this paper is that it demonstrates a pattern in a record generated by the pattern's own subject.

Part XI — The excluded, and the discipline

What a cheap conquest cost, and to whom.

This project requires every study to name the people who were inside an order's coercive reach and outside its settlement, because that is where the violence concentrates and it is the finding most often missed by an analysis of how the powerful arranged themselves.

This paper owes that more than most, because its central result is that one of these conquests was **cheap**, and cheapness is a fact about a conqueror's accounts and about nothing else whatever.

The cheap conquest's bill was paid elsewhere, and the sums are large. Because Buganda's own order held its own people, the British did not need force at the centre — so the force went outward. The Ganda armies, leased to the protectorate, conquered the neighbouring peoples on Britain's behalf; Bunyoro, Buganda's old rival and the source of the counties Buganda already held, was fought, broken and stripped, its grievance running for another seventy years. And across the protectorate in the first decade of the twentieth century a sleeping-sickness epidemic killed on a scale that halved populations in the affected districts, met with mass forced relocations away from the lakeshore. None of that appears in the column that makes the conquest look gentle. A conquest is called cheap when its costs are borne by people whose deaths were not entered.

The expensive conquest's bill was itemised and still not counted. In Kenya the instruments described in Part V are, read from the other side, a description of ordinary life: a tax that had to be earned on another man's farm, timed to fall due when that man needed hands; a criminal offence for leaving a labour contract; a copper container at the throat carrying an employer's opinion of you, in a script most of those who wore it could not read, which fixed your wage and decided whether you would be hired; a reserve filling past its capacity with no legal way out; a law forbidding you the crop your own ridge grew best, enforced by uprooting your trees. The squatter ratchet ended in 1939 with a hundred thousand people holding a labour contract on ground their fathers had cleared and nothing else at all.

And the Emergency that followed was not a symmetrical war. The forest fighters killed; the state detained, screened and hanged on a scale it took decades to admit, and at the end shipped and sank and burned the files. This project's earlier study on the colony makes the point that ought to close this section: **the same seam that hid the acts from the funder destroyed the count of them**, so the toll is not merely unknown but structurally unknowable, which is itself an act and not an accident.

On the analytical vocabulary. This paper has described human beings as an *elite*, a *mass*, a *cost column*, a *labour supply* and a *belief that did not take*. That register is chosen because vagueness about mechanism has protected more atrocity than it has prevented, and because a conquest is easier to excuse when it cannot be described. But the register has a cost and it should be paid explicitly at least once. The man who carried a red-ink condemnation of his own conduct around his neck without being able to read it was not an instrument for measuring missing belief. The chief Waiyaki did not die as a data point about misidentified seats; he died in chains on a road to the coast. And the ordinary Muganda whose devotion made his kingdom the cheapest hold in this collection paid for that cheapness by supplying the soldiers who broke Bunyoro.

Legibility is not pardon. To show that a conquest was efficient is to say something about the conqueror's ingenuity and nothing at all in his defence, and the finding that the gentlest taking is the most refined technique of taking is not a compliment to it. The orders described here were made possible, in the end, by the closing of exits — by geography where geography obliged, and by statute, tag and reserve boundary where it did not. That is the framework's finding and it is also a description of what was done to particular people, in a particular decade, by an administration that wrote down its reasons.

Conclusion

What the census shows, and what the pair of them settles.

The two orders that met the British on the East African highlands had solved the same problem in opposite ways, and everything that followed was downstream of the difference.

Buganda had concentrated. A founding conquest five centuries old had been naturalised until the Kabakaship was the furniture of reality; the kings had broken the hereditary clan-heads and replaced them with a nobility holding office at pleasure, so that the crown was the sole author of every powerful man's title; and a rule of matrilineal clan membership had dissolved the coalitions that a royal lineage would otherwise have grown, binding every clan to the monarchy and none to a claimant. The floor had withdrawn to the margins because the belief had taken. **That is a machine, and a machine can be captured** — so the British captured it, ran it, and paid almost nothing.

The Kikuyu had refused to concentrate, and had refused actively rather than by default. Authority was held by a whole generation and surrendered entire on a thirty-year cycle, so it could not pool; surplus ambition was vented down a moving forest frontier, so it did not press upward; and the anchor was thin, public and checkable by everybody, so no interpreter could be independent of the men he judged. **That is not a machine and cannot be captured** — so the British built a chair, staffed it necessarily with a man his own lineage had disowned, and paid for it in force every year for sixty.

From which the paper's three findings.

The conqueror's move is set by the settlement he meets. Redirect where there is a seat, forge where there is none — and the cost, the extraction method, the surveillance and the manner of the ending all follow from that single prior fact, which the conqueror did not choose.

The wall that Carneiro found in geography was built again in statute, deliberately, at a measured price. An open frontier kept the highlands flat for five centuries; a railway, a reserve boundary, a tax payable only in coin, a tag at the throat and a forbidden crop closed the exit in twenty years, and the officials who did it wrote down that compelling the native to leave his reserve was the point. Uganda's export books, next door, show what the closing cost in money the colony could have had. It

was preferred anyway, because what it bought was a labour supply with nowhere else to go.

And the ground was never empty. In a near-census of political orders taken by observers who went everywhere and had no interest in anyone's rightfulness, no society was found without a source of rightfulness people deferred to and somebody who read it. The variation was entirely in how the reading was organised — fused into a sacred king, dispersed among circumcised elders, or carried in a lineage trustee with no heir — and never in whether there was one. The interpreters differed in how completely the men with power had them; the framework's recent word for the difference is *credential distance*, and this paper's correction is that the scale only applies once authority has pooled somewhere it can be revoked from.

What that recurrence means is the project's largest claim and its least certain. It is not diffusion, because the cases had no contact. It is not a law of history, because plenty of attempts must have failed. The account this project gives is **selection**: a position affords few good moves, the camps that found none dissolved and left nothing, and the record we read is the residue. On that account the reason nobody was found just hanging around is not that hanging around is impossible. It is that it does not last long enough to be found.

A conqueror never meets an innocent condition, only an earlier build that took — and what he can do to it is decided by how the people he is conquering had already answered the question he is about to ask them.

A note on sources and scholarship

Every borrowed idea is explained in the text rather than invoked on authority; this note gives the references and the reservations.

On the two case studies. This paper is built on two earlier studies in this project, *British Buganda* and *British Kenya*, which were produced under a related but distinct framework and which carry their own full sourcing, module by module. Every factual assertion here about either case is established in those studies with its sources; the present paper contributes the reading, not the research, and where its reading revises theirs it says so in the text. The reservation in Part X — that evidence gathered to answer one framework's questions is a compromised test of another's — applies throughout and is not answered.

On the commitment problem and coordination. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49:3 (1995); Barry R. Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *American Political Science Review* 91:2 (1997). The horizontal application among armed peers is this project's extension.

On circumscription. Robert L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science* 169:3947 (1970), for environmental circumscription and the Peruvian–Amazonian contrast. Carneiro has been contested since publication; several primary states fit the model awkwardly, and bounded fertile land is also the land most worth fighting over and most easily taxed, so the correlation admits other causal stories. The extension to **legal** circumscription is the project author's, not Carneiro's, and Part V is its first clean instance.

On Buganda. The Kabaka's two titles, the *Lukiiko*, the *bakungu* and *batongole*, the appointive and revocable character of Ganda chieftaincy, the matrilineal clan rule for royal children, the Kintu and Kimera founding traditions and the contested fourteenth-to-sixteenth-century range for the kingdom's emergence, the expansion at Bunyoro's expense, and Mutesa I's reign name and the character of his floor all follow the earlier study and the scholarship it cites, including the reconstructions of M. S. M. Kiwanuka and Christopher Wrigley, whose accounts differ and are paraphrased rather than quoted. Speke's Hamitic hypothesis and the racial theory underlying it are named as the discredited theory they are; the point made here concerns the structure of the

observer's error, not the content of his claim. The Uganda Agreement of 1900 and the *mailo* freehold grant follow the earlier study.

On the Kikuyu and British Kenya. The *mbari* holding its *githaka* under a non-hereditary *mūramati*, the *riika* age-sets feeding the *kiama* councils and the *athamaki*, the *ituīka* handover between the alternating generations and its lapse in the 1920s, and the pioneer frontier reaching the Kiambu country in the late eighteenth century follow the earlier study and the modern scholarship it cites, principally Godfrey Muriuki's *A History of the Kikuyu, 1500–1900*, with the ethnographic and colonial-era record and, on the land grievance, M. P. K. Sorrenson; datings from reconstructed age-set lists are approximate and are given as such. The recursion — the Bantu expansion overlaying the Gumba, Athi and Dorobo by purchase, intermarriage and war — rests on the same tradition and scholarship.

The colonial instruments follow the earlier study's sourcing: the Uganda Railway completed in 1901; the hut tax of 1901 and poll tax of 1910, with the rate near sixteen shillings by 1920 and the European's first direct tax in 1913; the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1906; Sir Percy Girouard's statement that taxation was the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve to seek work, and Sir Edward Northey's 1919 circular on every possible lawful influence, both quoted exactly and briefly as the period phrasing on which the argument turns, with the 1921 corrective despatch and reprimand that followed; the Native Registration Ordinance of 1915 enforced from 1919, the *kipande* and its contents, the million-plus issued by 1932, and the settler revolt against universal registration in the late 1940s; the resident-labourer ordinance of 1918 and the ratchet to 1939; the coffee prohibition, the uprooting at Fort Hall, the cap on African trees, and the reversal under the Swynnerton Plan of 1954; and the 1934 export comparison between Uganda and Kenya. The lives of Waiyaki wa Hinga and Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu follow the biographical record cited there, including Waiyaki's death in custody in 1892 and Kinyanjui's progress from disowned *njaguti* to senior chief in 1908 and to the invented paramount chieftaincy thereafter.

On the framework applied. Possession and ownership, the anchor, the floor, sole authorship of title, the interpreter class and the two audiences are developed across this project's other theoretical papers and its case studies, and are restated here in compressed form so this volume stands alone. The credential-distance scale corrected in Part VIII is from *The Distance to the Sword*; the survivorship problem discussed in Part I, and the instrument proposed there, are from *The Shape of the Sieve*; the finding that anchor quality and elite coordination are independent, used in Part VII, is from the Hawaiian material in the latter.

On what is not attempted. This paper makes no claim to original historical research in East African history, which it enters as a visitor and in which it relies entirely on this project's earlier studies and the scholarship they cite. Its contribution is analytical: to argue that the colonial encounter is a class of evidence the project needs and has not used, to set two orders against each other as a matched pair, to give legal circumscription its first instance with a treatment date and a stated motive, to enter a new class of succession solution into the ledger, and to correct a scale this project proposed a short time ago by naming the precondition it silently assumed. It supersedes none of the earlier papers, which are left standing as written, so that the advance remains visible as something the evidence forced.